



## Candidate Questionnaire

### General Information

Candidate Name: Chelsea Byers

Office Sought: West Hollywood City Council

Proposed Ballot Designation: Nonprofit Director  
(Or Occupation Listing)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### Campaign Team\*

Provide the names and cell phone numbers for the following campaign team members:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### Elected Office

**Do you currently, or have you ever held public office?**

I have not held elected office, but have been appointed to serve in other positions.

**If yes, which public office(s) have you held and when did you do so?**

I am an appointee to the Human Services Commission and serve on the Housing Element Taskforce.

**Personal and Political Background**

**Current Occupation:** Director of Programs and Partnerships, Women’s Voices Now

**Are you a registered Democrat?** Yes.

**Have you ever been registered with another political party or selected “Decline to State” or “No Party Preference” for your voter registration party affiliation, and if so, for what period?**

No.

**In less than 250 words, briefly summarize your personal background (work experience, education, community involvement, etc.).**

I hold a Bachelors of Arts in Political Science with a Minor in Women’s Studies. I attended Franklin College in Switzerland for my first year of college and I graduated from Northern Arizona University. In my senior year of college, I was hired for a position in my student government, as student director for the advocacy organization that represented Arizona’s 160,000 public higher education students. I have spent my career working within the non-profit space as a full time employee, part time employee, and consultant. My work has focused on developing leaders for issue-based campaigning on issues ranging from education to anti-war, to violence against women, to environmental justice, and homelessness. I have compiled research and drafted reports to aid in the understanding of people-powered movements, and I have developed programming to move organizations through strategic planning processes to better align with their mission and goals. I currently support an annual film festival, which convenes women filmmakers from around the globe who create documentary films about the issues women and girls are facing worldwide.

I served on the Board of Directors for National Women’s Political Caucus and Abundant Housing Los Angeles, and am the President Emeritus of the Westside Young Democrats. I have participated in a number of fellowships including the Housing Policy Leadership Institute, New Leaders Council, Art for LA Activate Program, National Council for Jewish Women’s Advocacy Program, and the James Lawson Institute.

**What endorsements have you received from organizations and prominent individuals? (You may either use the space below or attach a separate list.)**

We’ve received the endorsements of the LA County Democratic Party, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, Sierra Club, Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley, UNITE HERE Local 11, Assemblymember Laura Friedman, LA City Councilmember Mike Bonin, Fmr. West Hollywood Mayor Abbe Land, and West

Democrats for Israel Los Angeles  
Candidate Questionnaire

Hollywood Councilmember John Erickson to name a few. You can find the full list of endorsements on our website: [chelsea4weho.com](http://chelsea4weho.com)

**In the past five years, have you:**

- **belonged to an organization that has taken action or formally expressed a viewpoint on Israel or related issues;**
- **participated in an organized activity, including a forum, on Israel or related issues; or**
- **while holding office, introduced or co-sponsored legislation (other than purely ceremonial, supportive measures) on Israel or related issues?**

I have participated in online drop in discussions with Progressive Zionists of California and regular meetings with Israel Policy Forum. I also attend the West Hollywood Antisemitism Summit hosted recently by ICAN and Congregation Kol Ami.

**Policy Questions**

**Please describe your positions on the following issues. Please limit your responses to 250 words for each response. If you wish, one response may include up to 500 words.**

- 1. Please describe your last trip to Israel and the Middle East, including the year of the trip and any group that arranged or sponsored the trip. If you have not yet been to Israel, when and to where do you plan on going in Israel, and the region generally, for your trip?**

I think going to places and seeing it for yourself is vital in understanding the challenges that we face in regards to Israel's security and stability in the region.

In 2018, I was invited to join a Pride Mission trip with A Wider Bridge but was unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts. In 2019 I began raise funds for a trip that was then canceled due to COVID.

- 2. Who do you speak with to develop your positions and views on Israel and the Middle East, including people overseas and local leaders in Southern California?**

Locally, I engage with the Progressive Zionists of California, discussions hosted by Israel Policy Forum, and more broadly, J Street engages on this issue in a way that promotes peace. Because of my leadership with the Young Democrats, I have built relationships within the California Young Democrats Jewish Caucus that I connect with on these issues. Moving forward, I would also connect with Assemblymember Laura Friedman who is a member of the Legislative Jewish Caucus and has endorsed my campaign. I am also an endorsed candidate of the Iranian Democratic Committee of California and will also look to their leadership, especially in these unfolding times in Iran.

**3. Please describe your relationship, if any, with the Israeli-American and Jewish community in Los Angeles.**

Homelessness and housing advocacy and organizing have been ways I've built strong relationships with Jewish community leaders across Los Angeles. During my time working with United Way as an Organizer for the Everyone In campaign, I worked with many Synagogues and Jewish community organizations to advance issues related to homelessness. I organized a bus tour of affordable housing with IKAR. I spoke on a panel at Temple Akiba's [Homelessness and Housing Forum](#) and on a panel at the Jewish Federation with the Mayor's Office. I was also a guest judge for a project on homelessness by the 8th grade class at Sinai Akiba Academy.

I attended the Advocacy Training Program at National Council of Jewish Women in 2016 and participated in advocacy efforts and lobbying through NCJW LA on a number of issues - including campaigning to expand victims' compensation fund for survivors of sexual crimes, and funding for the rape kit backlog. I also spent 13 months organizing a campaign to end California's Statute of Limitation and NCJW was home for our organizing efforts.

Now, as a Human Services Commissioner in West Hollywood, I support and work with a number of Jewish community organizations who provide direct service support for healthcare, rental subsidies, and more to the community.

**4. If elected, what committees and organizations would you try to be active in, and what policy areas would you try to affect that are relevant to Israel and the Middle East?**

I would continue to engage in dialogue with groups like Democrats for Israel- Los Angeles. While my position in local office does not deal with foreign policy, I understand that Israel's security is important not just for its residents, but for any Jewish person who sees it as a safe haven.

**5. Over the past decade, there has been a small but growing movement around the country to divest from Israel. These groups often use anti-Semitic language in their efforts, some target Jewish students on campuses and instead of discussing how to engage the democratic-process to challenge Israeli policies that may be objectionable, they try to delegitimize Israel or question its right to exist. In short, these are frequently attempts to influence state and local governments and their universities and pension boards not to invest in Israeli companies or companies that do business anywhere in Israel.**

**What is your view on the Israel boycott and divestment movement and what will you do about it?**

While I understand why some activists become involved in BDS, I do not support it because some supporters, including its cofounder, engage in antisemitism, which unravels our ability to come together around this issue at any level. Harm reduction is essential to moving forward on this issue and pushing strategies that exacerbate trauma and harm to the community is regressive and problematic. I believe that long-term stability and peace in the region comes from active diplomacy to foster a two-state solution.

- 6. The FBI's Uniform Crime Report for 2014 showed that there were more than 609 anti-Jewish hate crimes in the United States that year and even today, Jews were the most persecuted and targeted religious group in the country.**

**What steps would you take (for example, in the education and law enforcement arenas) to help prevent current and future anti-Jewish hatred and anti-Semitic activity in your jurisdiction?**

We need local leaders who will fight against extremists and fight for global peace. As a Councilmember, I will take my responsibilities as an elected official seriously to combat against anti-semitism and ensure that West Hollywood continues to be a safe place for the Jewish community to live and thrive.

I believe we need to fund restorative justice programs in local schools and have town halls surrounding the rise of anti-semitic violence. I also believe that the Council's recent decision to invest in community ambassadors will increase public safety in a way that is sensitive to communities that have been overpoliced.

- 7. As a Democrat, what steps can we take to help fight anti-Semitism on both the left and the right?**

I believe that it is important to have sensitivity to the history of Jewish persecution and that we continue to educate residents about this. We need to speak out when allies and friends use language that perpetuate anti-semitic tropes and be forceful as we see violent rhetoric and action increase from the rise of the far-right. We need to hold protests and introduce resolutions condemning this to show that anti-semitism has no place in West Hollywood or any part of this country.

- 8. What other issues do you think are unique or important to the Jewish and pro-Israel community, and how do you propose to make a difference with these issues and keep in touch with the community?**

Poverty affects 1 out of 5 Jewish people in Los Angeles and we need to ensure housing, rental subsidies, and other direct benefits programs including food and healthcare are accessible.

Climate change is an issue that affects Jewish voters both here in West Hollywood and abroad as it is a driver of violent extremism. We need local leaders who will lead on this and make our city as sustainable as possible. I believe we need to build more housing and

Democrats for Israel Los Angeles  
Candidate Questionnaire

increase alternative modes of transportation so that we can reduce the number of personal vehicles on the road and reduce emissions from our transportation sector which is one of the highest sources of emissions in the city. It is important to invest in adapting to the effects of climate change even as we continue to fight to reverse it in order to ensure that city government is protecting the health of West Hollywood residents. We need to invest in battery storage to ensure that people have access to power and make changes to our infrastructure such as ensuring every bus shelter in the city provides shade and increasing urban tree canopy in order to protect residents from rising temperatures.

Cities are on the frontlines of the climate crisis and best positioned to lead on these solutions. As a councilmember, I will work collaboratively and do extensive outreach to the Jewish community in order to create a more livable and equitable city.